

N OF LABOR

VOL. 37 NO. 1

Peron Ruling Labor By Fist, U.S. Union Mission Reports

American Delegates Rap Treatment of Argentine Workers

Washington, D. C.—Charges that the Argentine Government, under President Juan D. Peron, has established a dictatorship

Text of Report on Argentine Labor

INTRODUCTION

Inspired by a desire to promote friendship and collaboration among the free labor movements of the Western Hemisphere, a delegation representing the American Federation of Labor and the Railway Labor Executives Association left Washington, D. C., on January 15, 1947, for a tour of duty in Argentina.

The visit was undertaken at the invitation of the Argentine Government, prompted by an invitation from the Argentine Confederation of Labor, the American Federation of Labor and the Railway Labor Executives' Association made their acceptance conditional upon the sponsorship of the Argentine labor movement in order to make certain that the activities of the delegation would not be hemmed in and circumscribed by the Government. This point must be emphasized because of subsequent attempts by the Argentine Government to misrepresent the purposes of the mission and to prevent the delegation from accomplishing its objectives.

The express purpose of the trip was to make a survey of trade union

The delegation was met enroute in Rio de Janeiro on JANUARY 18 by a wel-

The delegation arrived at the Buenos Aires airport shortly after noon on January 19. We were greeted by a very large and enthusiastic group of workers and government representatives headed by a committee appointed by the Department of Labor and Welfare. Mixed in among the group, but not in any prominent position, were also members of the Executive Committee of the CGT.

It soon became known to us through statements made by CGT members

that, although a consular visit to the government of our trip, our country had been completely ignored in the selection of the official reception committees, as well as in the preparation of the program of entertainment and festivities which, covering the entire trip, had already been arranged by the government and published in the local press.

Immediately after our arrival we were given a reception at the Department of Labor and Welfare by the Secretary and other officials of the Department. We noted immediately that efforts were being made to give our presence in Argentina a political coloration. We cite one illustration: At the reception

We were invited to move our coats in view of the extreme heat and humidity. We were about to interpret this as an act of courtesy to us, but we were forced to revise our interpretation as soon as we noticed a flashing of photographers' bulbs and a grinding of newsreel cameras. Upon inquiry we learned that the removal of one's coat in public in Argentina is regarded as a symbolic gesture of support for Peron, who terms himself the champion of the "descamisados," or shirtless ones. The pro-government newspapers and newsreels played up the incident as though it were an indication of endorsement by us of the Peron Government.

met briefly with me and the representatives of the CGT, with whom I drafted a tentative program of activities, suggesting that they submit it to their government for approval. Our secretary, speaking for the delegation, then specifically stated to the CGT representatives that in line with instructions received from President Green of the United States, the purpose of the delegation was to assist in the Argentine government's efforts to increase political stability, and further that in making whatever arrangements were necessary to carry out the purpose of our visit it wished to deal jointly with the CGT and the Argentine government, since both were cosponsors of our trip.

to over plans for our first week's activities. After studying the plan which had been prepared and released to the press by the government prior to our arrival, we decided unanimously that we could not accept it without modification, since it was weighted too heavily with official receptions and pleasurable tours that had little to do with our business in Argentina. Furthermore, we had been assured by government officials while enroute to Argentina, that there would be an opportunity for the delegation to work out its detailed program jointly with the government and the CGT.

On the afternoon of the same day, just before we were to depart from our hotel to a reception to be accorded us by President and Mrs. Peron, the

General Secretary the CUT, Luis F. Gay, accompanied by other members of its Executive Committee, joined the members of the U. S. Labor Delegation to accompany them—which their position as co-hosts obviously required. However, in the lobby of the hotel a Mr. Poggio, an official of the Department of Labor, informed Gay that the delegation would be accompanied to the airport by a representative of the official reception committee of Argentine workers appointed by said department. There being no time to argue the matter, Gay and his colleagues graciously stepped aside and the official party proceeded to the reception.

During the course of the reception the secretary of the delegation remonstrated with Interior Minister Boriaghi and Foreign Minister Bramuglia.

about the exclusion of Gay and other CGT executives from the reception, pointing out that the U. S. delegation could hardly ignore this strange treatment accorded to the head of the labor organization which had cosponsored our invitation to Argentina.

After the formalities were over, President Peron indicated to us his desire to confer privately with the U. S. delegation and the Argentine workers'

reception committee. We discussed with the President some of the business details of the trip, with specific reference to the program of activities for the next few days. Secretary Romauldi, speaking for the delegation, renewed the request that we be permitted to map out our program and discharge our mission in cooperation and in consultation with both the CGT and the government. President Peron, however, indicated his dissatisfaction with our selection of the program prepared by the government and in addition objected

strenuously to the idea that the purpose of our mission was to "investigate" the labor movement or any other matter in Argentina. He indicated to us that in so far as our desire to confer with CGT officials was concerned, he felt that the fact that the officials of the Department of Labor and the members of the reception committee appointed by the department were also members and officers of CGT unions should be sufficient for our purpose.

However, after we advised him that we felt it necessary to adhere to our position on this matter, he instructed the Secretary of Labor to withdraw from further active participation in our mission, and he further advised us that henceforth we should make our arrangements exclusively through the CGT.

(End first installment)

over the Argentine Confederation of Labor were contained in a blistering report released here by a special American labor mission which visited the country.

The mission, representing the American Federation of Labor

and the Railway Labor Executives' Association, found the Peron administration dominating the labor movement through

use of armed force, political favoritism, bribery and imprisonment or expulsion of such labor leaders as dared to adhere to the true principles of freedom.

One of the gravest portions of the report revealed that Louis

Gay, general secretary of the Argentine General Federation of Labor, who sought to assist the American delegation in its study was ousted by Peron and dis-

So emphatic was the reaction

of the American group in its condemnation of the Peron labor dictatorship that it agreed unanimously to officially eliminate the Argentine Confederation from

The mission, which visited Argentina at the invitation of the Peron Government and the Argentine Con-

federation, reported that President Peron, host to the group, attempted to twist the survey into a harmless junket, but when the delegation insisted upon carrying out its functions, the hospitality soured and turned into harassment and

Through its International Relations Committee, headed by AFL Vice President Matthew Wolf, the AFL expressed its conviction that there could be no collaboration with the Axis

The AFL at the same time as

pealed to free labor movements throughout the world to offer every encouragement to such Argentine unions as are resisting dictatorial efforts by the Peron regime to subject them to government control.

To further this effort the AFL will make every effort to obtain wide international circulation of its report. Five thousand copies of a Spanish translation will be distributed throughout Argentina and other Latin

Due to its potential diplomatic implications, the AFL mission refrains from any contact with the Argentine

Government in drafting its report. However, it was believed likely the conclusions reached would lead to a AFI request that Argentina be barred from attendance at the annual conference of the International Labor

Through the three turbulent weeks the mission spent in Argentina, the hospitality grew thinner and thinner. When the group left Argentina February 9, the report revealed, only

Grave concern regarding the fate of Glas was expressed by the president of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, who said that the company's actions were "a disgrace to the engineering profession."

positions as president of the Postal Savings Bank; vice president of a telephone company and member of the board of directors of the Central Bank. The American delegation con-

"Every sort of rumor reached us, including one that he had been arrested, held for a period incommunicado and then confined in a sort of protective custody. We found it diffi-

cult to believe such could be the fate of a leader of an organization of more than a half million workers, just because he allegedly disagreed with the trade union plans of the President of the country."

The APL committee members included Arhold S. Zander, Serafino Romauldi, Lee W. Minton, Nigual Garriga, and William Munger; for the Railway Labor Executives' Association, Felix H. Knight, J. L. Elliott, and J. M. ...

WILLIAM L. FROST AND George H. Pedersen.



GEORGE MEANY, Secretary-Treasurer
